

Draft Environmental Assessment

Placid Lake State Park Campground Improvement Project



June 2009



***Montana Fish,
Wildlife & Parks***

Environmental Assessment MEPA, NEPA, MCA 23-1-110 CHECKLIST

PART I. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

1. **Type of proposed state action:** Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to install (13) campsite electrical pedestals within the southwest campground loop at Placid Lake State Park. This project will improve (13) of the (40) existing campsites or 32% of the available sites within the park. Furthermore, improvements to the electrical infrastructure of this campground loop will accommodate the installation of a restroom courtesy light at the public bathroom within the loop.

2. **Agency authority for the proposed action:**
FWP has the authority to develop outdoor recreational resources in the state per 23-2-101 MCA.

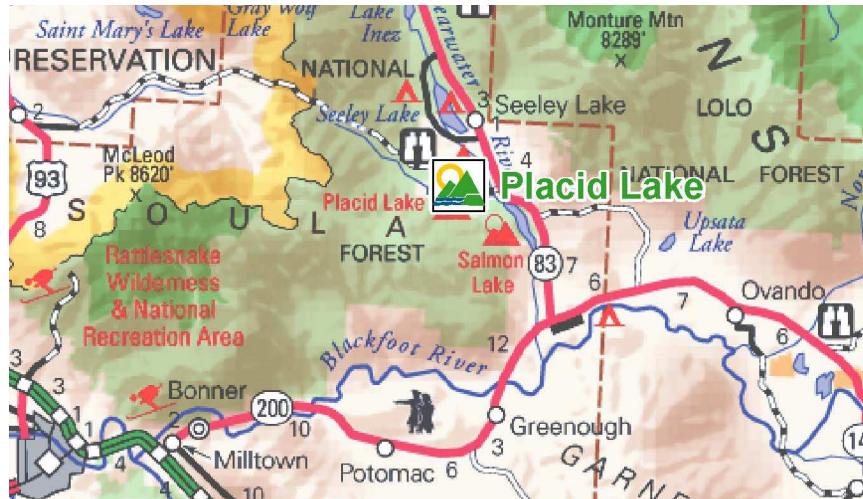
Furthermore, state statute 23-1-110 MCA and ARM 12.2.433 guides public involvement and comment for the improvements at state parks and fishing access sites, which this document provides.

Administrative Rule 12.8.602 requires the Department to consider the wishes of users and the public, the capacity of the site for development, environmental impacts, long-range maintenance, protection of natural features and impacts on tourism as these elements relate to development or improvement to fishing access sites or state parks. This document will illuminate the facets of the proposed project in relation to this rule.

3. **Project sponsor:**
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804
406-542-5500
4. **Estimated Schedule of Events:**
Public Comment Period: July 2009
Installation Commences: Fall 2009
Installation Complete: Fall 2009
Current Status of Project Design (% complete): 50%

5. **Location affected by proposed action:**
Missoula County, T16N R15W Section 28

Placid Lake State Park is approximately 6 miles southwest of the town of Seeley Lake, Montana.



6. Approximate project size:

	<u>Acres</u>		<u>Acres</u>
(a) Developed:		(d) Floodplain	<u>0</u>
Residential	<u>0</u>		
Industrial	<u>0</u>	(e) Productive:	
(b) Open Space/ Woodlands/Recreation	<u>1.5</u>	Irrigated cropland	<u>0</u>
(c) Wetlands/Riparian Areas	<u>0</u>	Dry cropland	<u>0</u>
		Forestry	<u>0</u>
		Rangeland	<u>0</u>
		Other	<u>0</u>

8. Listing of any other Local, State or Federal agency that has overlapping or additional jurisdiction.

(a) Permits:

State Electrical Permit secured by contractor.

(b) Funding:

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks \$ 66,000

(c) Other Overlapping or Additional Jurisdictional Responsibilities:

Montana State Historic Preservation Office Cultural Resources

9. Narrative summary of the proposed action:

Placid Lake State Park is located in west-central Montana, approximately 50 miles northeast of Missoula and 7 miles south of the community of Seeley Lake near Hwy 83. Placid Lake is approximately two miles long and two miles wide at its broadest point and is formed by Placid Creek, a tributary of Clearwater River. Most of the shoreline and land immediately surrounding the lake are privately owned. The only public access to the lake for recreational activities is through the Park's public areas.

Placid Lake State Park provides visitors with a full range of facilities including: a boat ramp and docks, three campground loops with a total of 40 camp sites, restrooms, showers, picnic area and shelter, and swimming area.

Over the past four years, Placid Lake State Park has received an average of 30,000 visitors annually. Of those, the majority are visiting the park to enjoy the camping opportunities (2006 Visitor Survey results). The survey found that over 50% of the campground visitors were using motorhomes or full-size trailers for their accommodations. The change from tent camping to large, more comfortable camping vehicles at the park is predictable since the sales and rentals of recreation vehicles within the U.S. has grown significantly over the last five years, based upon a national survey by the University of Michigan and all new hard-sided camping vehicles are equipped to connect to electrical power.

Currently, the park has three electric pedestals available at the campground, one for the campground host and one at each at the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) compliant campsites. Because there are so few electrified campsites, the demand for the three existing ones is very high and on a few occasions, a long extension cord can be seen connecting one recreation vehicle with another campsite's pedestal. ADA sites are regularly filled by able-bodied people seeking higher levels of service.

The results of the 2006 Placid Lake State Park Visitor Survey confirmed that many visitors desire electrical hookups at the campsites. Actual results revealed 30% of the survey's respondents felt this amenity was lacking and should be provided at the park. Furthermore, some of the survey participants noted noise from generators used in the park by campers was excessive and should be restricted to a limited number of hours because it diminished the quiet environment of the park. With the installation of additional electrical hookups, campers would be much less reliant on using their own generators, thusly decreasing noise levels and visitor complaints.

FWP experiences from previous campground electrification efforts have shown that some campers do appreciate the opportunity to use campsite pedestals instead of individual generators. Prior to 2007, there were no state parks providing campers the opportunity to utilize electricity for powering medical equipment, camper comforts, or recharging boating equipment. Feedback through visitor satisfaction surveys completed at the Cooney, Hell Creek, and Tongue River Reservoir State Parks in addition to visitor comment cards showed there was a contingent of campers that desired electricity within the campgrounds. Of the 110 visitor comment cards FWP received in 2005 at Hell Creek, 39 visitors asked if pedestals could be added to the park's facilities. The visitor survey completed at Tongue River Reservoir in 2007 reflected that 62% of respondents felt that electrical hookups at some of the campsites were important or very important. After the pedestals were installed at Cooney, Hell Creek, Tongue River Reservoir State Parks, comment cards and comments given directly to park staff reflected that many campers appreciated the campground improvements and the opportunity to plug-in instead of using their own generators. Now, those electrified sites have become the preferred sites for many visitors. This success is also expected to be seen at Placid Lake.

Proposed Action Description

With this growing segment of the camping enthusiasts coming to more Montana State Parks, FWP proposes to enhance the campground amenities at Placid Lake State Park by installing 13 campsite electrical hookups (pedestals) to provide electricity for campers and a courtesy light at the central restroom at the southeastern campground loop. (See *Appendix A* for the

Campground Map.) This loop was chosen in order to increase the use of this area by campers because it is further away from the lakeshore than the other two loops.

The design of the proposed electrification project ensures all utility connections will be underground, with only the pedestals visible at the campsites. This design will limit the intrusion of man-made objects to the natural environment of the park. The trenching of the conduits will require some disturbance of native vegetation and road crossings. FWP would prohibit trenching within 10-15 feet of mature trees to limit potential impact to them. (See Part II for a more in-depth discussion of potential impacts.) Preliminary designs include the installation of a new transformer and electrical panel to upgrade the electrical infrastructure to required levels in order to support the pedestals. Finally, considering the close proximity of the proposed conduits to the restroom between the southern campground loops, a courtesy light is planned for the exterior of the building for the safety and convenience of campers utilizing the restroom facilities after dark.

10. Alternatives:

Alternative A: No Action

If FWP chooses not to upgrade a portion of the existing campsites with electrical pedestals, visitors and campers that desire to utilize electricity will continue to inquire about them when they visit the campground.

Alternative B: Electrification of the Southeastern Campground Loops (13 campsites) – Preferred Action

The proposed enhancement to the campground at Placid Lake State Park with the electrification of 13 campsites would provide an additional service for camper comforts (e.g., medical equipment, kitchen appliances, TV, air conditioning, heaters, etc.).

Additionally, the electrification of these campsite loops could potentially lessen some of the pressure for lake-view campsites by visitors with RVs and 5th-wheel campers to otherwise underutilized campsites in the park making these more “prime” campsites available to tent campers or those visitors who have hard-sided camping units without electrical provisions. Furthermore, the new outlets will reduce the need for visitors to rely on noisy generators to power campers and recharge boating equipment.

PART II. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW CHECKLIST

The analysis of the physical and human environments discussed on the following pages is limited to Alternative B, the preferred action. This is because under Alternative A, FWP would not pursue any of the proposed improvements but the park staff would continue to provide routine maintenance to the current facilities and there would be no changes to the physical environment.

3. Evaluation of the impacts of the Proposed Action including secondary and cumulative impacts on the Physical and Human Environment.

A. PHYSICAL ENVIRONMENT

1. <u>LAND RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Soil instability or changes in geologic substructure?		X				1a
b. Disruption, displacement, erosion, compaction, moisture loss, or over-covering of soil, which would reduce productivity or fertility?			X		Yes	1b
c. **Destruction, covering or modification of any unique geologic or physical features?		X				
d. Changes in siltation, deposition or erosion patterns that may modify the channel of a river or stream or the bed or shore of a lake?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to earthquakes, landslides, ground failure, or other natural hazard?		X				

1a. The proposed project does require a limited amount of disturbances to localized soils but the project does not require any changes to geologic substructures.

1b. The design of the proposed project will require the digging of trenches for all the infrastructure improvements as well as for the conduits connecting each of the pedestals to one another and to the electrical panel. The trenches are expected to be 24" in depth and approximately 10" in width to accommodate a 3" conduit and necessary fill material. After the installation of the conduits is complete, the disturbed soils will be replaced and compacted so that natural vegetation can be reestablished.

Within the project area the soil is Courville gravelly silt loam and Wildgen-Winkler gravel loam with an eight to thirty percent slope.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. <u>AIR</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Emission of air pollutants or deterioration of ambient air quality? (Also see 13 (c).)			X			2a
b. Creation of objectionable odors?		X				
c. Alteration of air movement, moisture, or temperature patterns or any change in climate, either locally or regionally?		X				
d. Adverse effects on vegetation, including crops, due to increased emissions of pollutants?		X				
e. ***For P-R/D-J projects, will the project result in any discharge, which will conflict with federal or state air quality regulations? (Also see 2a.)		N/A				

2a. Minor and temporary dust are expected to be created by the trenching equipment during installation process to connect electrical transformers with pedestal outlets.

With the completion of the proposed electrification of the southeastern campground loop, odors associated with generators is likely to diminish since campers are likely to use the electrical hookups at the campsites instead their own generators.

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3. <u>WATER</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. *Discharge into surface water or any alteration of surface water quality including but not limited to temperature, dissolved oxygen or turbidity?		X				
b. Changes in drainage patterns or the rate and amount of surface runoff?		X				
c. Alteration of the course or magnitude of floodwater or other flows?		X				
d. Changes in the amount of surface water in any water body or creation of a new water body?		X				
e. Exposure of people or property to water related hazards such as flooding?		X				
f. Changes in the quality of groundwater?		X				
g. Changes in the quantity of groundwater?		X				
h. Increase in risk of contamination of surface or groundwater?		X				
i. Effects on any existing water right or reservation?		X				
j. Effects on other water users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quality?		X				
k. Effects on other users as a result of any alteration in surface or groundwater quantity?		X				
l. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect a designated floodplain? (Also see 3c.)		N/A				
m. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project result in any discharge that will affect federal or state water quality regulations? (Also see 3a.)		N/A				

The proposed project will have no affect on surface water, drainage patterns, or floodwater routes. As previously noted, disturbed soils will be reseeded with native vegetation, which will lessen the likelihood of new drainage patterns to become established.

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4. VEGETATION Will the proposed action result in?	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Changes in the diversity, productivity or abundance of plant species (including trees, shrubs, grass, crops, and aquatic plants)?		X				
b. Alteration of a plant community?			X		Yes	4b
c. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				4c
d. Reduction in acreage or productivity of any agricultural land?		X				
e. Establishment or spread of noxious weeds?			X		Yes	4e
f. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect wetlands, or prime and unique farmland?		N/A				

- 4b. FWP's proposed project does not anticipate the need for the removal of any mature trees. To minimize potential trenching impacts to root systems, trenching will be prohibited within 10-15 feet of mature trees. FWP acknowledge there may be instances that electrical conduits may have to breach such a boundary because of existing utility systems, existing roads, or the needs of pedestal placement.
- 4c. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database identified five nonvascular plants of significance: *Beck Water-marigold*, *Watershield*, *Howell's Gum-weed*, *Pygmy Water-lily*, and *Blunt-leaved Pondweed*, occurring in the region. There have been observations of Beck Water-marigold, Watershield, Howell's Gum-weed, and Blunt-leaved Pondweed around Placid Lake, but none have occurred at Placid Lake State Park.
- 4e. The installation of the pedestals may increase the possibility of noxious weeds becoming established because of the soil disturbing activities, especially along the access roads. Reseeding disrupted soils after construction will limit the potential for additional weeds by providing competition from a mix of local, native vegetation. Noxious weed control efforts will follow the guidelines presented in the FWP's 2008 Noxious Weed Management Plan, which includes the use of herbicides and mechanical efforts.

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**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

** 5. <u>FISH/WILDLIFE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Deterioration of critical fish or wildlife habitat?		X				
b. Changes in the diversity or abundance of game animals or bird species?		X				5b
c. Changes in the diversity or abundance of nongame species?		X				5c
d. Introduction of new species into an area?		X				
e. Creation of a barrier to the migration or movement of animals?		X				
f. Adverse effects on any unique, rare, threatened, or endangered species?		X				5f
g. Increase in conditions that stress wildlife populations or limit abundance (including harassment, legal or illegal harvest or other human activity)?		X				
h. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project be performed in any area in which T&E species are present, and will the project affect any T&E species or their habitat? (Also see 5f.)		N/A				
i. ***For P-R/D-J, will the project introduce or export any species not presently or historically occurring in the receiving location? (Also see 5d.)		N/A				

The proposed project will not take place in an area that is designated of critical habitat to a sensitive species, and it will not cause changes to wildlife diversity or abundance.

5b/c. Some transient game and nongame species, such as mule deer, white-tailed deer, ground squirrels, and chipmunks may be affected by the noise generated by the proposed project for a limited time and will likely avoid the construction areas. Most species will likely return to the area when the proposed project is completed and noise levels return to normal. Jay Kolbe, FWP Regional Wildlife Biologist, and Kristi DuBois, FWP Nongame Wildlife Biologist, were contacted and made this assessment.

5f. A search of the Montana Natural Heritage Program's (MNHP) species of concern database did not identify any species of concern or threatened or endangered species within or in close proximity to Placid Lake State Park.

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B. HUMAN ENVIRONMENT

6. <u>NOISE/ELECTRICAL EFFECTS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Increases in existing noise levels?			X			6a
b. Exposure of people to serve or nuisance noise levels?		X				
c. Creation of electrostatic or electromagnetic effects that could be detrimental to human health or property?		X				
d. Interference with radio or television reception and operation?		X				

- 6a. There would be a temporary increase in noise levels at Placid Lake State Park due to the installation equipment and contracting staff working at the site. After the completion of the project, noise levels are expected to improve to below pre-installation levels since it is expected some campers who used to rely on a generator will use the pedestals for electricity instead.

The project is intended to occur during the fall of 2009, which will be after the tourist season so that noises from the installation equipment will not disturb very many campers.

7. <u>LAND USE</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of or interference with the productivity or profitability of the existing land use of an area?		X				
b. Conflicted with a designated natural area or area of unusual scientific or educational importance?		X				
c. Conflict with any existing land use whose presence would constrain or potentially prohibit the proposed action?		X				
d. Adverse effects on or relocation of residences?		X				

The proposed project not will change the current use of the area.

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8. <u>RISK/HEALTH HAZARDS</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Risk of an explosion or release of hazardous substances (including, but not limited to oil, pesticides, chemicals, or radiation) in the event of an accident or other forms of disruption?			X		Yes	8a
b. Affect an existing emergency response or emergency evacuation plan, or create a need for a new plan?		X				
c. Creation of any human health hazard or potential hazard?		X				
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any chemical toxicants be used? (Also see 8a)		N/A				

- 8a. Chemical spraying is part of FWP's weed management plan to limit the infestation of noxious weeds within the park, which is traditionally completed by a contractor. The licensed professional would conduct weed treatment, and storage and mixing of the chemicals would be in accordance with standard operating procedures.

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9. COMMUNITY IMPACT Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of the location, distribution, density, or growth rate of the human population of an area?		X				
b. Alteration of the social structure of a community?		X				
c. Alteration of the level or distribution of employment or community or personal income?		X				
d. Changes in industrial or commercial activity?	X					9d
e. Increased traffic hazards or effects on existing transportation facilities or patterns of movement of people and goods?		X				

The proposed project will not affect local residents or traffic patterns in or around the park.

Camping visitors to the area will have a choice when considering where to camp because at nearby Salmon Lake State Park, FWP is also proposing to install electrical hookups at the campground's sites. The close proximity will give those campers looking to hook up, flexibility in case one of the state park campground's hookup sites is full.

- 9d. There are two known campgrounds in the town of Seeley Lake that offer RV camping with electrical hookups. The first is at the Tamaracks Resort, which is on Seeley Lake. This resort has 14 campsites offering both electrical and water hookups. Camping rates are \$28 per night and \$175 per week. The second location in Seeley Lake with an RV park is the Seeley Lake Motor Lodge, which is at the northern edge of town along State Highway 83. The Motor Lodge has 10 sites with electrical hookups. Some of the campsites also have sewer and water hookups. The rate at the lodge's campground is \$25 per night and \$160 per week.

If the proposed electrification plans for the 13 campsites at Placid Lake State Park is implemented, occupancy at the two privately-owned campgrounds in Seeley Lake may be affected because campers might choose to stay at Placid Lake rather than at the campgrounds in Seeley Lake because of the lower overnight rate charged for the campsite with an electrical hookup (\$20) at the park. However, some campers might prefer staying in the town of Seeley Lake and paying a higher fee and receive more services.

The exact effect of electrifying a portion of Placid Lake State Park's campsites to the other RV campgrounds is unknown. Prior to the summer of 2008, the Tamaracks Resort was the only area campground offering electrical hookups. Seeley Lake Motor Lodge's campground is a new addition to the business.

University of Montana's Institute of Tourism and Recreation Research survey of traveler characteristics based from April 2007 reflected a slightly higher percentage of the respondents stayed overnight in private campgrounds versus public ones when visiting Missoula County.

If campers want a higher level of service or additional amenities, park staff will continue to refer those visitors to private campgrounds in the area.

Through the competitive bidding process for services, it is possible that a locally owned electrical business could be chosen for the project, which would support the local economy and residents of the area.

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10. <u>PUBLIC SERVICES/TAXES/UTILITIES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Will the proposed action have an effect upon or result in a need for new or altered governmental services in any of the following areas: fire or police protection, schools, parks/recreational facilities, roads or other public maintenance, water supply, sewer or septic systems, solid waste disposal, health, or other governmental services? If any, specify:		X				
b. Will the proposed action have an effect upon the local or state tax base and revenues?		X				
c. Will the proposed action result in a need for new facilities or substantial alterations of any of the following utilities: electric power, natural gas, other fuel supply or distribution systems, or communications?			X			10c
d. Will the proposed action result in increased use of any energy source?			X			10d
e. **Define projected revenue sources						10e
f. **Define projected maintenance costs.						10f

10c. The proposed action will require the installation of new underground electrical conduit lines and possibly, new transformers to provide electricity to the new outlet pedestals. Existing buried sewer and telephone lines are not going to be affected by the proposed new electrical conduits and panel.

10d. The proposed electrification of a portion of the campsites at Placid Lake State Park is expected to increase the park's consumption of electricity since most camping visitors at the electrified campsite will likely be using hard-sided camping units. The convenience of the campsite outlets will provide visitors the opportunity to recharge boating equipment, cell phones, and other electronic equipment.

10e. If Alternative B (electrification) was completed, the park could expect an increase in revenue. The following chart shows the revenue estimates based on different levels of occupancy:

Total campsites = 40

Number of campsites proposed for electrification: 13, which are 32% of total campsites

Season: ½ May, June, July, August, ½ September = 120 days

Assumes an average occupancy rate of 75% over the entire season.

Occupancy (#of days x # of campsites x camp fee with hook up)		Less the Cost of the Electricity	Gross Revenue
75%	(120 days)(13 sites)(\$20/night) = \$23,400	-\$ 4,680	\$18,720

* Assume \$4 cost of electricity per night, first year

10f. Maintenance costs of the electrical pedestals will be minimal since they are designed to be self-contained. FWP will provide routine maintenance to guarantee the pedestals are safe for campers to use and are working properly. The installation of a courtesy light at the restroom will require some care in addition to the usual maintenance routine within the park to ensure the light is working and the bugs that have been attracted to the light are removed.

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** 11. <u>AESTHETICS/RECREATION</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Alteration of any scenic vista or creation of an aesthetically offensive site or effect that is open to public view?		X				
b. Alteration of the aesthetic character of a community or neighborhood?		X				11b
c. **Alteration of the quality or quantity of recreational/tourism opportunities and settings? (Attach Tourism Report.)		X				11c
d. ***For P-R/D-J, will any designated or proposed wild or scenic rivers, trails or wilderness areas be impacted? (Also see 11a, 11c.)		N/A				

11b. The design of the electrification project will have all electrical conduits underground with only the pedestals and electrical panel visible. This design will ensure the natural beauty of the state park is maintained.

11c. The proposed improvement to Placid Lake State Park will not change the recreational opportunities at the park, only enhance the services provided for visitors. See *Appendix C* for Tourism Report.

There is the possibility the southwestern campground loop may need to be closed to campers for a limited amount time when trenching is required through the access road.

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12. <u>CULTURAL/HISTORICAL RESOURCES</u> Will the proposed action result in:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. **Destruction or alteration of any site, structure or object of prehistoric historic, or paleontological importance?		X				12a
b. Physical change that would affect unique cultural values?		X				
c. Effects on existing religious or sacred uses of a site or area?		X				
d. ****For P-R/D-J, will the project affect historic or cultural resources? Attach SHPO letter of clearance. (Also see 12.a.)		N/A				

- 12a. A cultural assessment of the site was completed by the State Historical Preservation Office, which found limited previously known historically and culturally sensitive areas in the vicinity of Placid Lake State Park. . See *Appendix D* for the recent SHPO concurrence letter.

Although SHPO believes there is a low likelihood the proposed project will impact any cultural resources, FWP's Heritage Resources Program Manager will determine if a cultural resource survey is needed prior to the implementation of the proposed improvements and will consult with the State Historic Preservation Office as necessary. If any previously unrecorded cultural resource sites are discovered during construction, the Heritage Resource Program Manager will work with project engineers and the park manager to develop a project design that avoids further disturbance to these sites.

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*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

SIGNIFICANCE CRITERIA

13. <u>SUMMARY EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE</u> Will the proposed action, considered as a whole:	IMPACT *					
	Unknown	None	Minor	Potentially Significant	Can Impact Be Mitigated	Comment Index
a. Have impacts that are individually limited, but cumulatively considerable? (A project or program may result in impacts on two or more separate resources that create a significant effect when considered together or in total.)		X				
b. Involve potential risks or adverse effects, which are uncertain but extremely hazardous if they were to occur?		X				
c. Potentially conflict with the substantive requirements of any local, state, or federal law, regulation, standard or formal plan?		X				
d. Establish a precedent or likelihood that future actions with significant environmental impacts will be proposed?		X				
e. Generate substantial debate or controversy about the nature of the impacts that would be created?		X				
f. *** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , is the project expected to have organized opposition or generate substantial public controversy? (Also see 13e.)		N/A				
g. **** <u>For P-R/D-J</u> , list any federal or state permits required.		N/A				

This EA found no significant impacts to the human or physical environment from the proposed action. Some public debate is anticipated.

* Include a narrative explanation under Part III describing the scope and level of impact. If the impact is unknown, explain why the unknown impact has not or cannot be evaluated.

** Include a narrative description addressing the items identified in 12.8.604-1a (ARM).

*** Determine whether the described impact may result and respond on the checklist. Describe any minor or potentially significant impacts.

**** Include a discussion about the issue in the EA narrative and include documentation if it will be useful.

2. Evaluation and listing of mitigation, stipulation, or other control measures enforceable by the agency or another government agency:

Final plans and specifications for the project will be developed by the state appointed engineering consultant in conjunction with FWP engineering staff. A private contractor selected through the State's competitive bid process will complete construction. Final inspection will be the responsibility of the FWP Design and Construction Bureau.

State pesticide use laws and regulations will be followed. Application records will be submitted to the Montana Department of Agriculture as required every five-years, and these records will be available to state investigators upon request.

PART III. NARRATIVE EVALUATION AND COMMENT

The proposed campground improvement project within Placid Lake State Park will meet the increasing needs and desires of campers and boaters wanting to utilize electricity to charge batteries and power camping comforts, such as air conditioning, refrigerator, and TVs. The additional electrified campsites will also decrease the demand for the ADA accessible campsites that currently have hookups. Lastly, the chosen campground loop for the proposed project will provide campers an incentive to camp in an area of the park that is often underutilized.

Because of the scope of the proposed improvements, it is expected there will be a limited number of impacts to the human and physical environment. However, most of these influences, which were previously noted, are expected to be only for the relatively short duration of the construction period with no lasting negative effects on the local environment. For those actions requiring minor mitigation, such as the trenching of the electrical system for the hookups and connections to the existing power source, efforts will be taken to reseed disturbed areas and efforts will be taken not to stress mature trees in the vicinity of the conduits. The reseeding of the affected areas will decrease the chance of noxious weeds being established and will limit erosion.

The facility improvement to the Placid Lake State Park is expected to improve camper satisfaction and meet camper expectations for site amenities.

The proposed project was reviewed and its anticipated impacts were compared with those noted in 23-1-110 MCA (ARM 12-8-601-608) to determine if the improvements proposed would significantly change park or fishing access site features or use patterns (i.e., construction of new roads, large excavations, above-ground utilities, shore alterations, etc.). It is the opinion of this reviewer that the proposed campground electrification project will not significantly alter Placid Lake State Park's physical features or alter user patterns within the park.

PART IV. PUBLIC PARTICIPATION

1. Public Involvement:

The public will be notified in the following manners to comment on this current EA, the proposed action and alternatives:

- Legal notice in each of these newspapers: *Helena Independent Record*, *Seeley Swan Pathfinder*, and *The Missoulian*;

- One statewide press release;
- Public notice on the Fish, Wildlife & Parks web page: <http://fwp.mt.gov>. (The EA will be posted under "Recent Public Notices.")
- If requested, FWP would conduct a public meeting on this proposal.

Copies of this environmental assessment will be distributed to interested parties to ensure their knowledge of the proposed project. Copies will be available for public review at FWP Region 2 Headquarters.

This level of public notice and participation is appropriate for a project of this scope having few minor impacts and public support for the enhancements to the campground.

2. Duration of comment period:

The public comment period will extend for thirty (30) days following the publication of the legal notice in area newspapers. Written comments will be accepted until 5:00 p.m. on August 10, 2009 and can be mailed to the address below:

Placid Lake State Park Campground Improvement Project
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
Region 2 Headquarters
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804

Or email comments to: Lee Bastian at lbastian@mt.gov or to Chris Lorentz at clorentz@mt.gov

PART V. EA PREPARATION

1. Based on the significance criteria evaluated in this EA, is an EIS required? (YES/NO)? No Explanation:

Based upon the above assessment (Part II) that identified a very limited number of minor impacts from the proposed action, which can be mitigated below significance, an EIS is not required and an environmental assessment is the appropriate level of review.

2. Persons responsible for preparing the EA:

Lee Bastian
Regional Parks Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
3201 Spurgin Road
Missoula, MT 59804-3101
406-542-5517

Chris Lorentz
Park Manager
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
P.O. Box 136
Seeley Lake, MT 59868-0136
406-677-6804

Rebecca Cooper
MEPA Coordinator
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks
1420 E. 6th Ave., PO Box 200701, Helena MT 59620-0701
406-444-4756

3. List of agencies consulted during preparation of the EA:

Missoula Electrical Coop, Inc.

Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks:

Design & Construction Bureau

Legal Bureau

Parks Division

Wildlife Division

Montana Department of Commerce – Tourism

Montana State Historical Preservation Office

Montana Natural Heritage Program – Natural Resources Information System (NRIS)

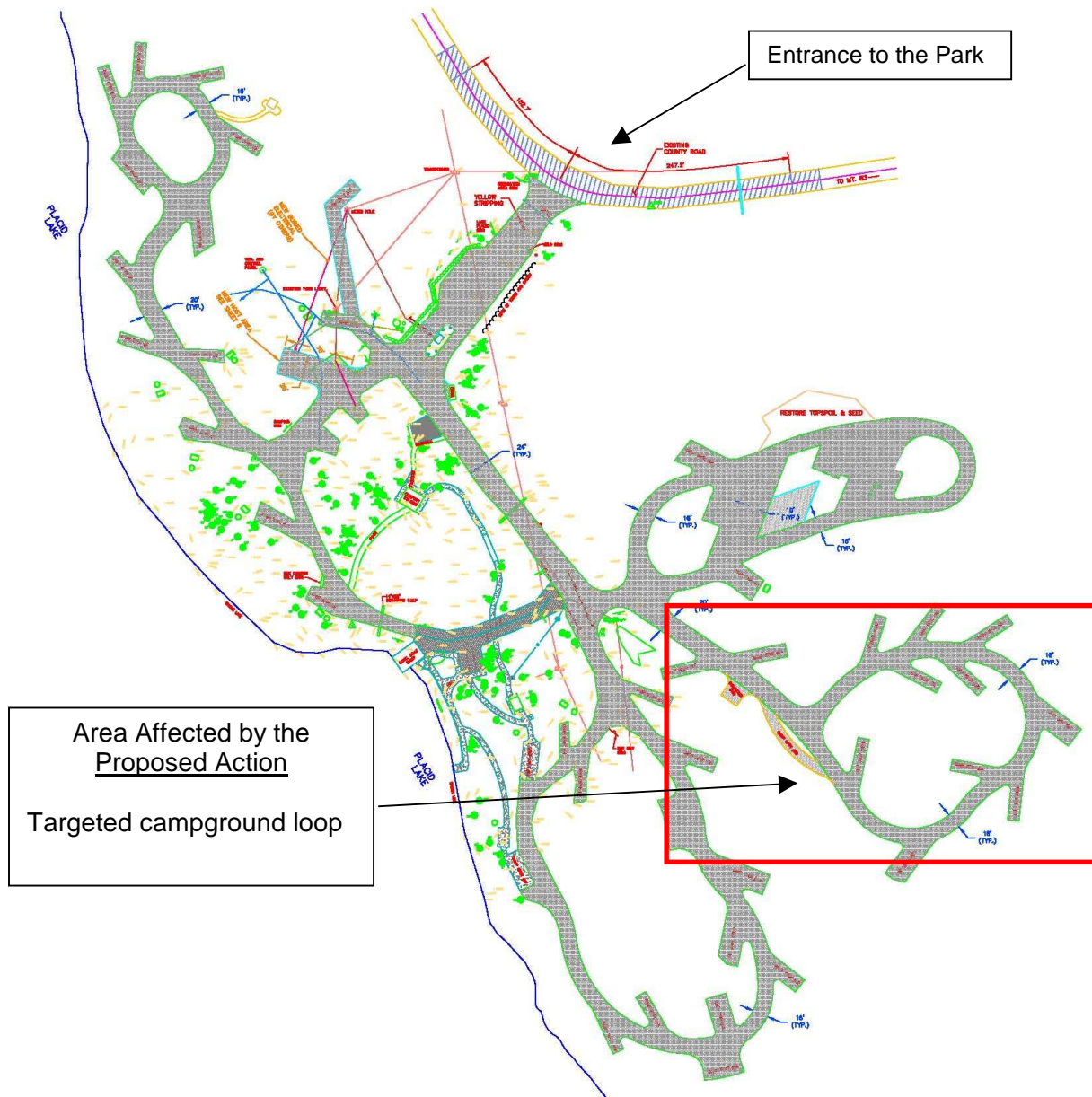
Northwestern Energy

APPENDICES

- A. Placid Lake State Park Campground Map
- B. Concept Map for Proposed Action
- C. Tourism Report – Department of Commerce
- D. SHPO Concurrence Letter
- E. HB 495 Checklist

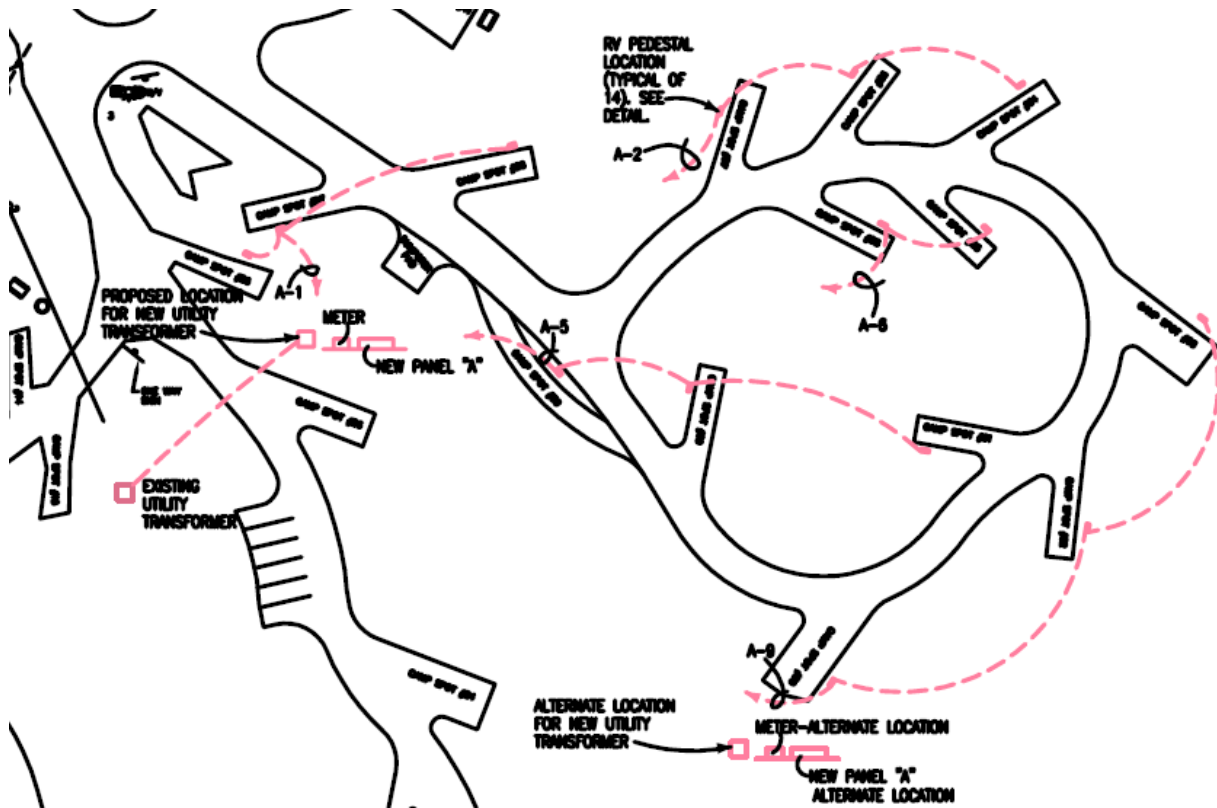
APPENDIX A

Placid Lake State Park Campground Map



APPENDIX B

Preliminary Electrical Concept Plan (Alternative B)



Red dotted lines indicate electrical connections and possible conduit patterns within the southeastern campground loop.

APPENDIX C

Tourism Report

TOURISM REPORT MONTANA ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY ACT (MEPA) & MCA 23-1-110

The Montana Department of Fish, Wildlife and Parks has initiated the review process as mandated by MCA 23-1-110 and the Montana Environmental Policy Act in its consideration of the project described below. As part of the review process, input and comments are being solicited. Please complete the project name and project description portions and submit this form to:

Victor Bjornberg, Tourism Development Coordinator
Travel Montana-Department of Commerce
PO Box 200533
Helena, MT 59620-0533

Project Name: Placid Lake State Park Electrification Project

Project Description: To install 20 electrical outlet pedestals in the campground at Placid Lake State Park to meet the needs of RV and 5th-wheel campers.

Placid Lake State Park is approximately 6 miles south of Seeley Lake.

1. Would this site development project have an impact on the tourism economy?
NO ☒ YES If YES, briefly describe:

The project will help meet the needs of the campground users, and improve services. ^{It will} make Placid Lake a stronger attraction for users, benefiting the area's tourism economy.

2. Does this impending improvement alter the quality or quantity of recreation/tourism opportunities and settings?
NO ☒ YES If YES, briefly describe:

~~But~~ The quality and quantity of visitor services, setting and opportunities will be enhanced.

Signature Victor Bjornberg, Tourism Dev. Coordinator Date 7-23-07

APPENDIX D
SHPO Concurrence Letter



MONTANA HISTORICAL SOCIETY

225 North Roberts ♦ P.O. Box 201201 ♦ Helena, MT 59620-1201
♦ (406) 444-2694 ♦ FAX (406) 444-2696 ♦ www.montanahistoricalsociety.org ♦

August 1, 2007

Paul Valle
FWP
PO Box 200701
Helena MT 59620-0701

RE: POWER INSTALLATION FOR PLACID LAKE, LEWIS & CLARK CAVERNS,
COONEY, AND WAYFARERS STATE PARKS. SHPO Project #: 2007080101

Dear Mr. Valle:

I have conducted a cultural resource file search for the above-cited projects. According to our records there have been a few previously recorded sites within the designated search locales. In addition to the sites there have been a few previously conducted cultural resource inventories done in the areas.

We feel that there is a low likelihood cultural properties will be impacted. We, therefore, feel that a recommendation for a cultural resource inventory is unwarranted at this time. However, should cultural materials be inadvertently discovered during this project we would ask that our office be contacted and the site investigated. Thank you for consulting with us.

If you have any further questions or comments you may contact me at (406) 444-7767 or by e-mail at dmurdo@mt.gov.

Sincerely,

Damon Murdo
Cultural Records Manager

File: FWP/PARKS/2007



STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICE ♦ 1410 8th Ave ♦ P.O. Box 201202 ♦ Helena, MT 59620-1202
♦ (406) 444-7715 ♦ FAX (406) 444-6575

APPENDIX E

HB495 PROJECT QUALIFICATION CHECKLIST

Date Feb 29, 2009

Person Reviewing Rebecca Cooper

Project Location: Missoula County, T16N R15W Section 28

Description of Proposed Work: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks (FWP) proposes to improve the electrical infrastructure of southeastern campground loop at Placid Lake State Park in order to install campsite electrical hookups and a restroom courtesy light.

The following checklist is intended to be a guide for determining whether a proposed development or improvement is of enough significance to fall under HB 495 rules. (Please check all that apply and comment as necessary.)

- ☐ A. New roadway or trail built over undisturbed land?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ B. New building construction (buildings <100 sf and vault latrines exempt)?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ C. Any excavation of 20 c.y. or greater?
Comments: *The exact amount of soil that will be disturbed is unknown but is expected to be much less than 20 cubic yards.*
- ☐ D. New parking lots built over undisturbed land or expansion of existing lot that increases parking capacity by 25% or more?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ E. Any new shoreline alteration that exceeds a double wide boat ramp or handicapped fishing station?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ F. Any new construction into lakes, reservoirs, or streams?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ G. Any new construction in an area with National Registry quality cultural artifacts (as determined by State Historical Preservation Office)?
Comments: *No*
- ☐ H. Any new above ground utility lines?
Comments: *No, all new electrical lines would be buried.*
- ☐ I. Any increase or decrease in campsites of 25% or more of an existing number of campsites?
Comments: *No*

- ☐ J. Proposed project significantly changes the existing features or use pattern; including effects of a series of individual projects?
Comments: *No*

If any of the above are checked, HB 495 rules apply to this proposed work and should be documented on the MEPA/HB495 CHECKLIST. Refer to MEPA/HB495 Cross Reference Summary for further assistance.